

# HEALTH

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## Urinary Incontinence

Loss of bladder control is called urinary incontinence. It can happen to anyone, but is very common in older people. At least 1 in 10 people age 65 or older has this problem. Symptoms can range from mild leaking to uncontrollable wetting. Women are more likely than men to have incontinence.

Aging does not cause incontinence. It can occur for many reasons. For example, urinary tract infections, vaginal infection or irritation, constipation and certain medicines can cause bladder control problems that last a short time. Sometimes incontinence lasts longer. This might be due to problems such as:

- Weak bladder muscles
- Overactive bladder muscles
- Blockage from an enlarged prostate
- Damage to nerves that control the bladder from diseases such as multiple sclerosis or Parkinson's disease
- Diseases such as arthritis that can make walking painful and slow

Many people with bladder control problems hide the problem from everyone, even from their doctor. There is no need to do that. In most cases **urinary incontinence can be treated and controlled, if not cured.** If you are having bladder control problems, don't suffer in silence.

### Bladder Control

The body stores urine in the bladder. During urination, muscles in the bladder contract or tighten. This forces urine out of the bladder and into a tube called the urethra that carries urine out of the body. At the same time, muscles surrounding the urethra relax and let the urine pass through. Spinal nerves control how these muscles move. Incontinence occurs if the bladder muscle contract or the muscles surrounding the urethra relax without warning.

### Diagnosis

The first step in treating a bladder control problem is to see a doctor. Your physician will give you a physical exam and take your medical history. The doctor will ask about your symptoms and the medicines you use. The physician may also request a urine and blood test and a test that measures how well you empty your bladder.

For more information on urinary incontinence contact National Association for Continence at 1-800-252-3337 or visit their website at [www.nafc.org](http://www.nafc.org).



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